



Background Note: “Transforming the EU’s food systems – can plant-based foods and biosolutions enhance food security and resilience?”

The EU is a key global producer of agricultural products and it has a positive agricultural trade balance. Farming and food, including fisheries, are strategic sectors for the EU, supplying safe, high-quality food to 450 million Europeans, while also supporting global food security.¹

However, as emphasised by both the European Commission and the study entitled *The Dependency of the EU’s Food System on Inputs and their Sources*, commissioned by the European Parliament², Europe is dependent on the import of some key products and, in some cases, these originate from a limited number of third-country suppliers. While the overall availability of food in the EU is not considered to be at risk, the EU’s dependency on a limited number of third-country suppliers for certain products represents a strategic vulnerability.

The EU’s dependency on imported inputs is particularly significant in the case of animal products (e.g. soybean meal for livestock feed) and cereals, which are dependent on the import of raw materials and energy to produce fertilisers³. Among other countries, Russia and Belarus account for a substantial share of the EU’s fertiliser imports.

As highlighted in the European Commission’s *Vision for Agriculture and Food*, geopolitical tensions, recent crises, extreme weather events, environmental degradation, and structural changes are threatening the viability of the sector and the EU’s strategic autonomy. “*Dependencies are becoming vulnerabilities*,”⁴ as Mario Draghi has pointed out.

The Niinistö Report⁵ on the strengthening of Europe’s civil and military preparedness and readiness also recognises food as one of the sectors that is most critical to maintaining essential services to citizens.

The upcoming reform of the EU’s Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) presents an opportunity to further reduce the EU’s strategic dependencies and

¹ “*A Vision for Agriculture and Food*”, European Commission - [Com\(2025\)0075](#).

² *The Dependency of the EU’s Food System on Inputs and their Sources*. Research for the AGRI Committee | Think Tank | European Parliament – March 2024.

³ *The Dependency of the EU’s Food System on Inputs and their Sources*

⁴ *The Draghi Report on Competitiveness* -September 2024

⁵ Niinistö, S., *Safer together – Strengthening Europe’s Civilian and Military Preparedness and Readiness*, 2024.



strengthen European food security. As EU Commissioner Christophe Hansen stated when presenting the proposal on 16 July 2025: “*The CAP is an anchor of European food security*”.

Bio-solutions, plant-based foods and food security

As part of this reflection, bio-solutions and the plant-based consumption and production of food have the potential to help strengthen the EU’s food security across the entire food chain.

Through a combination of innovation and traditional knowledge, bio-solutions and plant-based foods offer significant potential to drive the transformation of the EU’s food system. They can contribute towards increasing demand for healthier foods, improving animal welfare, contributing to the decarbonisation of the agri-food sector, and futureproofing the sector to ensure it can exist in harmony with nature. Such a transformation could provide new business opportunities for farmers and the broader agri-food sector while also inspiring a new generation of agri-food entrepreneurs.

According to the European Commission, the use of bio-solutions, such as new genomic techniques (NGTs), are key to accelerating the development of climate-change-resilient, resource-efficient, nutritious and high-yield varieties of crops, which can contribute to the EU’s food security and food sovereignty⁶. The Council and the European Parliament are currently seeking to reach a compromise around the European Commission’s proposal to regulate NGTs.

While the current CAP offers some options for supporting an increase in plant-based food production⁷, production could also benefit from an ambitious common European policy. Recently, several key European stakeholders, as part of a strategic dialogue with the European Commission, recommended that the Commission prepare an EU Action Plan for Plant-Based Foods ahead of 2026 with a view to strengthening the plant-based agri-food chains from farmers all the way to consumers⁸.

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⁶ A Vision for Agriculture and Food – [Com\(2025\)0075](#).

⁷ Danish Action Plan for Plant Based Food – Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries of Denmark <https://en.fvm.dk/Media/638484294982868221/Danish-Action-Plan-for-Plant-based-Foods.pdf>

⁸ “Strategic Dialogue on the Future of EU Agriculture – A Shared Prospect for Farming and Food in Europe” – September 2024.



Plant-Based Food

The term plant-based food covers all foods derived from plants, as well as edible fungi, algae and nutritious microorganisms. The term plant-based food can also include enzymes and other non-animal ingredients that are suitable for human consumption.

(Source: Danish Action Plan for Plant-Based Foods, October 2023)

Bio-Solutions

Bio-solutions are an interdisciplinary field focused on harnessing biological systems – such as enzymes, proteins, and bacteria – at an industrial scale. These solutions can enhance the taste, nutrition and shelf life of plant-based foods, while also reducing the climate and environmental impact of food production.

(Source: Danish Action Plan for Plant-Based Foods, October 2023)



Guiding questions for the discussion:

- In what specific ways can plant-based foods and bio-solutions enhance the EU's global competitiveness and reduce import dependency? What are the main barriers to achieving this, and what should an EU action plan for plant-based foods aim to deliver?
- The strategic dialogue encourages the EU and its Member States to adopt demand-side policies that cover the entire food system and make healthy, sustainable diets more available, accessible, affordable and attractive. What could be the key elements of such policies?
- From a business perspective, what is the potential of innovative plant-based foods and bio-solutions, and what are the key barriers that businesses face today? And, in this regard, what support or policy changes are needed to unlock this potential and scale up sustainable solutions?
- What challenges do the current EU regulatory frameworks, particularly the Common Agricultural Policy, pose to the development of plant-based foods and bio-solutions? And what should a future CAP focus on in order to better support sustainable and innovative food production?